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This file includes the magazine's front cover, full seven-page feature, and back cover for context and provenance. Created as part of the Gene W. Poor Digital Archive for BGSU and permanent public record on Archive.org.

This feature introduces LifeFormations and its unique approach to entertaining, educating, selling, persuading, and storytelling through the use of lifelike, moving characters. LifeFormations specializes in animatronics—the art and technology of creating motion-based figures that capture attention and communicate messages with power and clarity.

The article explains how animatronics functions as a communication tool, blending storytelling, visual design, and artistic representation to deliver experiences that engage audiences emotionally and intellectually. Whether used in museums, retail environments, visitor centers, or corporate settings, LifeFormations' characters are designed to inform, inspire, and captivate.

Digitized and preserved for educational and historical reference by Dr. Gene W. Poor, November 2025.

**A feature on LifeFormations and its use of animatronics to inform, entertain, and communicate through lifelike moving characters.**



SPRING/SUMMER 08 | Volume 2, Issue 3

# bodyliving

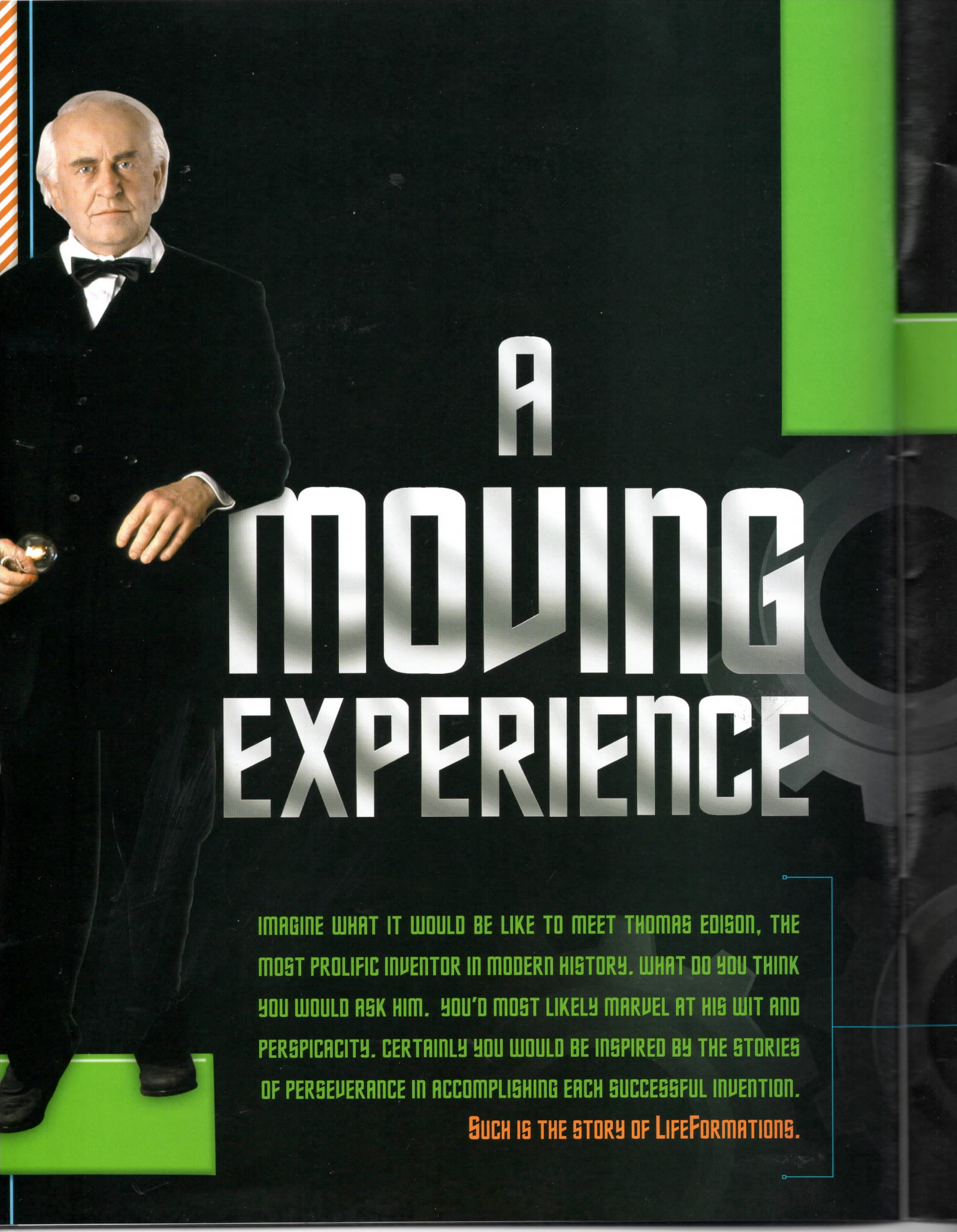


## REAL GENIUS

HI-TECH HAPPENINGS HERE IN BG

CITY STORY: SENTINEL-TRIBUNE | TRIBUTE TO JOAN GORDON | ARTIST SCOTT REGAN | TOP TEN FESTIVITIES





# A MOVING EXPERIENCE

IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO MEET THOMAS EDISON, THE MOST PROLIFIC INVENTOR IN MODERN HISTORY. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD ASK HIM. YOU'D MOST LIKELY MARVEL AT HIS WIT AND PERSPICACITY. CERTAINLY YOU WOULD BE INSPIRED BY THE STORIES OF PERSEVERANCE IN ACCOMPLISHING EACH SUCCESSFUL INVENTION.

**SUCH IS THE STORY OF LIFEFORMATIONS.**





Written By John Rankins, Executive Editor



LifeFormations is about entertaining, educating, selling and persuading. It is about capturing your attention and conveying a story. LifeFormations' preferred way of doing that is through creating moving objects and characters. It's called animatronics. If you've ever found yourself captivated by a moving or speaking character at an amusement park, you've no doubt experienced the thrill of animatronics. It is designed to blend the latest in motion technologies with the fine art of sculptured realism. Animatronics is a communication tool that balances basic storytelling techniques, visual design and artistic representation. The characters are created to capture the attention of would-be passers-by throughout casinos, theme parks, museums and trade shows.

LifeFormations began in 1982 as a division of Good Displays in Toledo. Founder and BGSU professor Gene Poor began as a consultant and in 1991 purchased the division, moving it to Bowling Green. This is a company that believes the wider the diversity of experiences and perspectives on its team, the more unique and successful the projects will be. LifeFormations has assembled a team of designers, artists, craftspeople, media producers, lighting and control system experts, and scholars that influence and inspire each other's ideas in a way that few other companies have achieved.



AT THE HEART OF ANYTHING WE ARE  
GOING TO CREATE IS AN ORIGINAL  
IDEA, NEWFOUND TECHNIQUES TO  
CREATE SOMETHING THAT HAS NEVER  
BEEN SEEN BEFORE.

RODNEY HEILIGMANN, PH.D., CEO





Early clients included Dana, Owens Corning and Champion Spark Plug. LifeFormations continued to grow, not only expanding the markets for static and animated figures, but also raising the level of quality and believability that could be achieved. Currently, projects range from realistic figures like President Lincoln to a 25-foot Tyrannosaurus Rex. The company creates mascots, whimsical creatures and animals from the imagination as well as monochrome and metallic figures. There are also many unearthly figures from the imaginations of the creators. One famous sculpture resides in New York's Jekyll and Hyde Restaurant.

Since its conception, LifeFormations has created more than 2,000 realistic figures based on authentic gestures and expressions, which they cite as the true key to making sculptures seem real. Often, LifeFormations will create an historic or contemporary person's likeness from a portrait. More notably, LifeFormations has had the distinct pleasure of working directly with some of the clients whose likeness it has re-created: Whitey Herzog, Johnny Cash, and Satchel Paige.

In 2006, LifeFormations created a five-foot can of Campbell soup for Jungle Jim's International Market in Cincinnati, Ohio. The five-foot can of soup sits on a 17-foot swing and "chatters" to the customers as well. Not only did LifeFormations sculpt the can from clay and mold it from fiberglass, but the company also designed the robotic software for the sculpture as well. The eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth are controlled by air cylinders. More locally, LifeFormations teamed up with Fifth Third Bank this past year to create a potting shed for the Simpson Children's Garden.

## A LOOK INSIDE





## CHARACTER DESIGN

Each project that LifeFormations builds is often hatched out of the ever-evolving ideas spread across the minds of designers and clients. The projects are usually one-of-a-kind prototypes that are unique to this world. Given this, LifeFormations tries to make the process of realizing these ideas in a three-dimensional world as transparent and real as possible. Creating animatronics characters is a very intricate process. The art and technology involved in making each character combine design, engineering, sculpting, mold-making, skin fabrication, painting and hair, costume creation, lights, sound and special-effects programming. Scriptwriting and voice talent as well as timelines and budget constraints additionally direct the overall process. Once these variables are solidified, the character goes into production.

## SET DESIGN

To enhance the character experience, LifeFormations also includes several different kinds of media. By using video, lighting, audio and special effects, the company is able to create a true interactive experience that draws an audience in. The set creation is key to maintaining the audience's attention. LifeFormations provides the same attention to detail for all the characters—from the creation of the props and surrounding elements to the environment where the characters will be placed. Additionally, touch screens and various interactive elements really enhance the authenticity of the experience for the audience.

The unique challenges differ for each and every project because there is never a blueprint to work from. Everything is a prototype. Each piece is unique. The guiding principle of every project is that every element created must look, move and act aesthetically correct. Also pivotal is the reliability of each creation. The performance criteria must meet or exceed the desired lifespan and maintenance considerations.







WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO ANIMATE SOMETHING, YOU ARE NOT ONLY TRYING TO CREATE A LIKENESS TO IT BUT YOU ARE TRYING TO GIVE IT PERSONALITY, AND WHAT WE DO AS A COMPANY IS TAKE IT ONE STEP FURTHER AND GIVE IT SOUL. CLIENTS COME TO US BECAUSE WE CAN GRAB A PARTICULAR POSE THAT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE A SNAPSHOT IN LIFE. WE ARE ABOUT FINDING A LIKENESS AND REPRODUCING IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT GOES IN AND TOUCHES PEOPLE'S HEART, MIND AND FUNNY BONE. IF YOU DO THAT, YOU HAVE EVERYTHING. YOU'VE CAPTURED ALL THE WAYS WE COMMUNICATE; YOU SEE IT, YOU HEAR IT, YOU TOUCHED IT AND THERE REALLY ISN'T ANYTHING BETTER THAN THAT. **GENE POOR, FOUNDER**



WE DISCOVERED THAT STOPPING PEOPLE REQUIRES MOVEMENT. MOVEMENT WILL STOP TRAFFIC. WE'VE REALLY GOTTEN GOOD OVER THE YEARS AT BEING ABLE TO ANIMATE JUST ABOUT ANYTHING: A PERSON, PRODUCT OR SERVICE. ANIMATRONICS IS ABOUT PUTTING THINGS OUT IN FRONT OF PEOPLE THAT WILL STOP THEM, TELL THEM A STORY, AND GET THEM TO DO SOMETHING. **GENE POOR, FOUNDER**





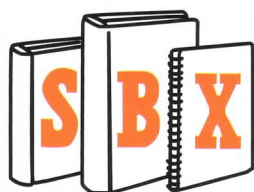


Today, LifeFormations has established itself as one of the preeminent figure-sculpting studios in the world. Additionally, its fabrication and technical divisions continue to expand Life Formations' capabilities to complement and increase the potential of its figures. In 2002, Gene invited several long-term employees who had made the company a success to join him as partners in the company. The result has been a string of incredible figures that have helped to redefine how animatronics figures are used today.

What's next? LifeFormations is really excited to take the show on the road—that is, to actually travel around the nation with Thomas Edison and Ben Franklin speaking at universities and corporations about creativity. According to Gene, "Creating a traveling lectures series that features interactive experiences with the country's great leaders and speakers is an exciting opportunity. He believes this type of tour provides a highly heralded, thought-provoking and memorable experience for each audience. *We agree.*







## A budding inventory

SBX offers shorts in a variety of styles and colors to meet all your needs as the cold of winter thaws and signs of spring begin to warm up the Bowling Green community. SBX is proud to carry a large variety of BGSU Falcons clothing and merchandise, including sweatshirts, gifts and alumni gear. SBX has served Falcons fans for over fifty years. Stop in and see why.





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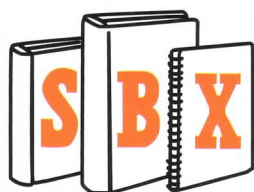


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